

Don't Fence Me In (song)

"Don't Fence Me In"	
Music by	Cole Porter
Lyrics by	Robert Fletcher and Cole Porter
Written	1934
Recorded by	Roy Rogers, Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters, Ella Fitzgerald, Gene Autry, Eddy Arnold, Willie Nelson, Little Willie Littlefield, The Killers
Performed by	Kate Smith

"Don't Fence Me In" is a popular American song written in 1934, with music by Cole Porter and lyrics by Robert Fletcher and Cole Porter.

Origins

Originally written in 1934 for *Adios, Argentina*, an unproduced 20th Century Fox film musical, "Don't Fence Me In" was based on text by a poet and engineer with the Department of Highways in Helena, Montana, Robert (Bob) Fletcher. Cole Porter, who had been asked to write a cowboy song for the 20th Century Fox musical, bought the poem from Fletcher for \$250. Porter reworked Fletcher's poem, and when the song was first published, Porter was credited with sole authorship. Porter had wanted to give Fletcher co-authorship credit, but his publishers did not allow that. After the song became popular, however, Fletcher hired attorneys who negotiated his being given co-authorship credit in subsequent publications. Although it was one of the most popular songs of its time, Porter claimed it was his least favorite of his own compositions.

In 1934, Robert Fletcher sent Porter his song, entitled "Don't Fence Me In," which he had written at the suggestion of film producer Lou Brock, with the film *Adios, Argentina* in mind. Porter bought the rights, with the agreement that he would use the title, could re-work the lyrics if he chose, and could write his own music.

Porter's revision of the song retained quite a few portions of Fletcher's lyrics, such as "Give me land, lots of land", "... breeze ... cottonwood trees", "turn me loose, let me straddle my old saddle," "mountains rise ... western skies", "cayuse", "where the west commences," and "... hobbles ... can't stand fences," but in some places modified to give them "the smart Porter touch". Porter substituted some whole lines, rearranged lyric phrases, added two verses, and composed his own music for it. (Porter's exact verse about Wildcat Kelly was not included in any of the hit recordings of the song nor used in either of the movies in which the song was used. Roy Rogers did refer to "Wildcat Willy" when he performed it in 1944's *Hollywood Canteen*).

Cover versions

Ten years later, in 1944, Warner Bros. resurrected "Don't Fence Me In" for Roy Rogers to sing in the movie *Hollywood Canteen*. Many people heard the song for the first time when Kate Smith introduced it on her radio broadcast of October 8, 1944.

"Don't Fence Me In" was also recorded by Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters in 1944. Crosby entered the studio on July 25, 1944, without having seen or heard the song. Within 30 minutes, he and the Andrews Sisters had completed the recording, which sold more than a million copies and topped the *Billboard* charts for eight weeks in 1944–45.

Ella Fitzgerald recorded the song on her Verve Records, *Cole Porter Songbook*, album. It was also released on *Ella Fitzgerald Sings More Cole Porter*.

Covers of the song were also made by Gene Autry; Eddy Arnold who included it on his release *A Dozen Hits*, and Hoyt Axton on his 1982 LP *Pistol Packin' Mama*. Willie Nelson also recorded a version of the song with Leon Russell.

Little Willie Littlefield recorded a version for his 1990 album *Singalong with Little Willie Littlefield*.

The Killers recorded the track to be used in support of the 2013 Nevada state tourism campaign, called "A World Within. A State Apart."

Roy Rogers and "Don't Fence Me In"

In 1945, the song was sung again as the title tune of another Roy Rogers film, *Don't Fence Me In* (1945), in which Dale Evans plays a magazine reporter who comes to Roy Rogers' and George "Gabby" Hayes' ranch to research her story about a legendary late gunslinger. When it's revealed that Gabby Hayes is actually the supposedly dead outlaw, Rogers must clear his name. Rogers and The Sons of the Pioneers perform songs, including the Cole Porter title tune. The next year (1946), a biopic about Cole Porter titled *Night and Day* used a clip from *Hollywood Canteen* of Rogers singing "Don't Fence Me In."

Pop culture

- 1954 – The song was sung in the 1954 action movie *Hell and High Water*.
- 1961 – Shortly after the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961, a Communist-run East Berlin radio station called Ops, used "Don't Fence Me In" as the theme song for its nightly broadcast aimed at Allied soldiers, based in West Berlin.^[1]
- 1990 – David Byrne did a cover of this song in 1990 for a Cole Porter tribute album entitled *Red Hot + Blue*. Byrne performed what he describes as his "Brazilian" version of the song during his 2004 tour for the *Grown Backwards* album.
- 1992 – Lynn Anderson recorded the song for her album *Cowboy's Sweetheart* in 1992.
- 1992 – Chumbawamba recorded a version of the song with lead vocals by Danbert Nobacon. A segment of the song featured on the unreleased album *Jesus H. Christ* that was later reworked to become *Shhh!* (1992), but "Don't Fence Me In" did not feature on the final album cut.^[citation needed]
- 1993 – Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa's character, Eddie Sakamura, sings it at a karaoke bar in the opening scene of the 1993 film, *Rising Sun*. It is also played while the end credits roll.
- 1999 – The song was featured in the 1999 film *The Bachelor*, which follows a sworn bachelor who is reluctant to marry.
- 2000 – The song was used in the opening credits of the 2000 film *Chopper*.
- The Australian male voice choir The Spooky Men's Chorale has recorded the song on their DVD album *Deep*.
- Black Iris covered the song in a popular Nokia commercial for the Nokia C7. Despite public response, the song was never released as a full-track mp3.
- Steve Goodman performed the song, including on his album *The Easter Tapes*, recorded during one of his annual visits with New York radio personality Vin Scelsa.
- The first verse of the song was sung by Apu in The Simpsons episode "The Lastest Gun in the West".
- 2013 - Pablo Bubar [2] reintroduced the song in one of the musical romance sketches of "Pablo the Romantic" from "Boom Town", broadcast by BBC Three (UK, 2013). This version includes the piano music of Ross Leadbeater [3].

References

- [1] <http://earthstonestation.wordpress.com/2012/08/19/dont-fence-me-in/>
 - [2] <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm4729433/>
 - [3] <http://www.rossleadbeater.com/>
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